

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/04/2019 08:51 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Catalyst Academy Charter School (S282B190005)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Assisting Educationally Disadvantage Students		
1. Significance	15	13
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	25
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	20	13
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	14
Quality of the Continuation Plan		
1. Continuation Plan	15	13
Sub Total	100	78
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	10	0
Sub Total	10	0
Total	110	78

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY19 New Developers 84.282b - 1: 84.282B

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Catalyst Academy Charter School (S282B190005)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. The Secretary considers the significance of contribution in assisting educationally disadvantaged students for the proposed project. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunity for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to open, replicate, or expand will recruit, enroll, and effectively serve educationally disadvantaged students, which include children with disabilities and English learners.

Strengths:

The proposed project will contribute significantly to the lives of educationally disadvantaged students. By design (Project Abstract), the school aims to serve traditionally underserved students residing in neighborhoods where 83% of the population is African American, and in neighborhoods with higher rates of poverty, unemployment, and crime than the rest of Pittsburgh (p. e22). Additionally, students in the neighborhoods surrounding the charter school location are currently “underserved by existing education options”; the applicant cited evidenced that the average student proficiency rates on the PSAA were 26% of students in ELA, 12% in math and 34% in science (p. e22-e23).

The plan for recruiting educationally disadvantaged students is comprehensive and appropriate for the target population. The applicant thoroughly describes a “grassroots recruitment strategy [that] will cast a wide net through diverse channels” (p. e25). The diverse channels --which include attending community events, door-to-door canvassing, information nights at the homes of prospective students, appearances at local churches, clubs and organizations – demonstrate familiarity with the community and the target population and knowledge of the local community (p. e25).

Enrollment procedures allow for fitting accommodations for the target population and admissions decisions that privilege educationally disadvantaged students. The applicant has aptly considered ways to assist families with the enrollment application by allowing families access to online materials through technology at the school site and one-on-one assistance with application completion (p. e26). State law permits an admission preference for “at-risk” students (p. e26), which the applicant will leverage to enroll educationally disadvantaged students and serve the most underserved students in the local community.

The applicant has satisfactorily designed a program and selected instructional approaches with strong evidence of effectiveness with the target population (p. e27–e34) and alignment with state standards (p. e44). Key program elements include high expectations, strong relationships, high academic rigor, quality instruction, personalization, holistic development. The applicant suitably intends to use Multi-Tiered Student Support and Response to Intervention to support the success of students with special needs (p. e35).

Weaknesses:

Though the applicant claims that it will “intentionally recruit students who are eligible for special education services” (p. e12), there is limited evidence regarding the enrollment and performance of students with disabilities in the local schools and how they may be currently underserved. Further, there is an absence of specific strategies to intentionally recruit students with disabilities.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

The extent to which --

Reader's Score: 25

Sub

- 1. i. The goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specific and measurable; and**

Strengths:

The goals, objectives, outcomes, and activities of the proposed project are clearly outlined and well-aligned in the Logic Model on pages e38-e40. The outcomes and performance measures are specific and measurable, with defined benchmarks and appropriately identified tools for measuring progress and attainment. For example, Outcome 1.A.2 under Goal 1, Objective 1.A (p. e38) sets a goal of 80% of teachers increasing by at least one out of five levels (benchmark) or Effective/Exemplary on Essential Content on the TNTP Core Teaching rubric (measurement tool).

Additionally, outcomes and performance measures are timebound (i.e., based on the length of student enrollment) and tiered (i.e., where a single goal has different expectations and different points in time) where necessary. For example, Outcome 2.A.2. sets a different benchmark of proficiency for students attending the charter school for four years (75% proficiency) compared to students enrolled for only two years (40% proficiency). Such detail in outlining goals, objectives and outcomes enhances the specificity of the goal and demonstrates the credible thought and planning that accompanied the program design.

Weaknesses:

The goals, objectives and outcomes lack pertinent information on baseline performance necessary for evaluating the relevancy and attainability. For example, Objective 2.C.1 states that "Students with limited/interrupted formal education and level 1 students will be reclassified by the end of their 5th year." Yet, there is no evidence of what current reclassification rates and timelines are in the local district. Further, the applicant suggested that they expected to enroll few English language learners due to the demographics of the local community (p. e12), drawing into question the relevance of the objective.

Reader's Score: 13

- 2. ii. The design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

The applicant comprehensively describes program design elements (pillars) and pedagogical approaches, including high expectations, longer school days, improving meta-cognition, teaching for fluency and transfer, building background knowledge. The program design rightly attends to multiple facets of students' development, including academic, interpersonal (metacognition), and social-emotional (p. e43-e48).

Sub

The applicant provides adequate research-based evidence regarding the effectiveness of some of the program elements for the target population. For example, the applicant appropriately cites a meta-analysis as evidence to support the implementation of strategies to increase students' metacognition (p. e46).

The applicant indicates a substantial investment in the development and training of teachers using research-based programs from The New Teacher Project and Jounce (p. e31, e41–e43), which are supported by strong evidence of effectiveness for developing teachers and in turn improving student outcomes (p. e31). The applicant appears to lead the project with teacher development, as it is the first goal, which correctly positions the work as foundational to the other project pillars. The commitment to 25 days of professional development and 120 minutes a week of ongoing professional development and collaboration is impressive.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe specific curricula that will be implemented along with the instructional pillars to support the academic success of the target population.

The applicant does not provide sufficient evidence that some of the instructional pillars and practices are effective in preparing students for college (Goal 2) or enabling a holistic development of students (Goal 3). For instance, the applicant describes in detail the structure of a longer school day, but fails to provide research-based evidence that longer instructional days leads to better college preparation or a more holistic student.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:

The extent to which --

Reader's Score: 13

Sub

1. i. The applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability; and

Strengths:

The applicant states that it will "intentionally seek diverse candidates at all levels of the organization" and acknowledges the importance of employing teachers that "reflect the racial and cultural backgrounds" of the students (p. e51).

Weaknesses:

The personnel recruitment strategies, as described, are insufficient to encourage applicants from traditionally underrepresented groups. Although the plan includes engagement with a national search firm with a "track record of developing diverse pipelines" (p. e51) to recruit a Founding Principal, there is no description of how the applicant will continue to recruit applicants from underrepresented groups. No employee recruitment plan is outlined.

Sub

Reader's Score: 1

2. ii. **The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel**

Strengths:

The named school leaders, governing board members, consultants, advisors, and key personnel have extensive experience in school leadership, non-profit development and management, political advocacy and charter school operations (p. e52–e57).

The governing board represents diversity of expertise and perspectives, as well as deep roots in the community, which will enable the successful implementation and execution of the proposed project (p. e52–e57).

The school leader has evident experience in working with educationally disadvantaged youth (p. e52).

The applicant has built strategic partnerships with community-based nonprofits that will support the ongoing success of the school. For example, the applicant has partnered with NEED to support the higher education goals that the applicant and community set for students, Jounce to enhance the professional development of teachers, and ELDI to encourage and enable community development (p. e55–e56).

Weaknesses:

The applicant exhaustively describes the qualifications and experience of the school leaders, governing board members, consultants, and advisors (p. e52–e57), but does not identify key personnel directly responsible for carrying out the proposed project.

The experience of the key personnel, including the school leader and the school development consultant, is teaching in and leading middle and high schools (p. e52–e53). There is a startling lack of experience leading elementary school programs and serving young children.

The qualifications and relevant experience of instructional and special education personnel, who will be instrumental in the implementation of the proposed project is not addressed.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the applicant's management plan, the Secretary considers the following factors:**

Reader's Score: 14

Sub

1. i. **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines,**

Sub

and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;

Strengths:

The activities and milestones (p. e59-e60) are appropriately linked to project goals and objectives outlined in the Logic Model (p. e38-e40).

The applicant fittingly assigns responsible parties to each major activity of the proposed project (p. e59-e60) and sufficiently explains how responsibilities for school leadership and operation will be shared by the leadership team (p. e60).

Weaknesses:

The management plan is not adequately detailed to suggest that objectives are likely to be met.

The timeline encompasses broad date windows that incorporate the full grant period for most activities. For example, under Objective 2.A. activities include implementing instructional leadership and coaching, teacher PD, implementing CCSS- aligned curricula, and personalized learning tools and the only dates provided for a timeline are from 8/1/20 – 6/15/24 (p. e58). A more thoroughly conceived timeline would include, for example, dates for identification, acquisition, and teacher training for specific CCSS-aligned curricula. The management plan only includes milestones for the first year or those that may occur annually. For example, Objective 3.A outlines two milestones, one for the completion of a scope and sequence for the SEL curriculum and one for the selection of a SEL rubric, to be completed by “3/31” (p. e59). However, there are no milestones or outlines for professional development or implementation other than the full grant term (8/15/19 – 6/15/24). The lack of detail in the timeline and milestones indicates insufficient planning to ensure objectives of the proposed project will be accomplished.

The budget similarly lacks sufficient detail in some expense categories to assess the likelihood of accomplishing project tasks. For example, the applicant requests funds for travel to send teachers and leaders to various curriculum based professional development workshops (p. e110) and funds for curriculum materials and supplies (p. e111), but does not provide sufficient details on the curriculum or professional development. The shortage of details in some budget categories suggests an absence of thorough planning and ample consideration of costs.

Additionally, the cost of student electronic devices included in the budget (p. e111) is not addressed in the project plan or management plan, or in the description of instructional strategies. It is unclear how such expenses contribute to the accomplishment of the project objectives.

Reader's Score: 9

2. ii. **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project; and**

Strengths:

The applicant sufficiently explains how responsibilities for school leadership and operation will be shared by the leadership team (p. e60).

The descriptions of the division of responsibilities between the CEO and the principal (p. e60) indicate that the time commitments of personnel and their task responsibilities will lead to attainment of project goals and objectives.

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Sub

Reader's Score: 3

- 3. iii. How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate.**

Strengths:

The inclusion of a diversity of perspectives in the operation of the charter school and the implementation of the proposed project is evidenced in the composition of the Board of Trustees, which includes professionals with a variety of disciplinary expertise from education leadership and non-profit management, to financial management and legal expertise, to community activism and entrepreneurship (p. e53-e54).

The applicant demonstrates commitment to considering a diversity of perspectives through the administration of annual parent, teacher and community partner surveys (p.e61).

The applicant earnestly intends to incorporate the perspectives of parents through the development of a Parent Advisory Council (p. e61).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses noted.

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Continuation Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the continuation plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the continuation plan, the Secretary considers the extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate the charter school that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.**

Strengths:

The members of the Board of Trustees have admirably demonstrated a lifetime "commitment to equity, social justice, education and their communities" (p. e62). Additionally, the Board of Trustees has endured several arduous years of planning and approval to this point (p. e62). This commitment and their collective expertise will enable future success of the charter school.

The applicant has documented the ability to raise funds to support the school program through securing over half million dollars from private foundations to-date (p. e63). Further, the program has established a fund development plan for additional startup costs (p. e63).

The applicant's budget proposal includes many one-time start-up expenses, like the acquisition of equipment and curriculum materials (p. e111), which will not be necessary to fully sustain in future years.

The applicant has robust plans to cultivate the internal leadership pipeline (p. e63) and an instructional coaching model that supports teacher development and growth (p. e62). Additionally, the school plans for the ongoing professional development through train-the-trainer models which will promote retention and empower teacher leadership.

The applicant has built strategic partnerships with community-based nonprofits, such as NEED and the Urban League, that will support the ongoing success of the school (p.e72-e82), as strongly evident in their letters of support. In addition, the applicant has earned the support of key political figures representing the community including a state representative and city council member (p. e72-e73), which enables the political will of ongoing operations of the charter school.

Weaknesses:

Despite the fact that the applicant articulates plans to scale down the proportion of leadership salaries covered by grant funds over the term of the project (p. e109), the plan is unconvincing. The reliance on grant funds to support leadership salaries indicates that full operational costs cannot be funded by state per pupil funds alone. Without supplemental philanthropic funding, this may be unsustainable.

Expenses don't necessarily reflect projected revenue in regards to restricted funds, such as special education.

Reader's Score: 13

Priority Questions**Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2****1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Opening a New Charter School or Replicating or Expanding a High-quality Charter School to Serve Native American Students**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

a. Propose to open a new charter school, or replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that—

1. Utilizes targeted outreach and recruitment in order to serve a high proportion of Native American students, consistent with nondiscrimination requirements contained in the U.S. Constitution and Federal civil rights laws;
2. Has a mission and focus that will address the unique educational needs of Native American students, such as through the use of instructional programs and teaching methods that reflect and preserve Native American language, culture, and history; and
3. Has or will have a governing board with a substantial percentage of members who are members of Indian Tribes or Native American organizations located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school;

b. Submit a letter of support from at least one Indian Tribe or Native American organization located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school; and**c. Meaningfully collaborate with the Indian Tribe(s) or Native American organization(s) from which the applicant has received a letter of support in a timely, active, and ongoing manner with respect to the development and implementation of the educational program at the charter school.****Strengths:**

No strengths noted.

Weaknesses:

Competitive Preference Priority 2 was not addressed.

Reader's Score: 0

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Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 09/05/2019 11:46 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Catalyst Academy Charter School (S282B190005)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Assisting Educationally Disadvantage Students		
1. Significance	15	12
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	25
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	20	16
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	16
Quality of the Continuation Plan		
1. Continuation Plan	15	13
Sub Total	100	82
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	10	0
Sub Total	10	0
Total	110	82

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY19 New Developers 84.282b - 1: 84.282B

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Catalyst Academy Charter School (S282B190005)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantage Students

1. The Secretary considers the significance of contribution in assisting educationally disadvantaged students for the proposed project. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunity for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to open, replicate, or expand will recruit, enroll, and effectively serve educationally disadvantaged students, which include children with disabilities and English learners.

Strengths:

The applicant states that its six core elements are designed to prepare all scholars, and especially educationally disadvantaged scholars for college, career and life. (e16) These core elements are 1) high expectations; 2) strong relationships; 3) academic rigor; 4) quality instruction; 5) innovation and personalization; and 6) holistic scholar development.

Census data was provided for targeted neighborhoods that indicate low-income, high unemployment, and high poverty rates as well as low educational attainment, high drop out and high crime rates. (e22) The neighborhood schools' low achievement rates on state testing clearly depict educationally disadvantaged students in need of a high-quality educational option.

The application includes a description of an enrollment lottery and the applicant intends to seek approval to provide a preference for "at risk" students. (e26)

The applicant will utilize a grassroots recruitment strategy in targeted neighborhoods that includes door to door canvassing, parties at homes of prospective school parents, host school tours and speak at local churches, clubs and organization. (e25)

Weaknesses:

The applicant states on page e12 that it will intentionally recruit students eligible for special education services and English Language Learners. The budget assumptions on page e89 indicate the projected enrollment of SPED students is 17%, yet there is no demographical data provided to support this assumption and no data to support an ELL population.

There is no description of what intentional recruitment strategies the proposed project will develop and use to ensure the enrollment of students identified as having special needs or English Language Learners.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

The extent to which --

Reader's Score: 25

Sub

1. i. The goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specific and measurable; and

Strengths:

The applicant lists three goals for the proposed project which are 1) developing school leaders and teachers to create a rigorous, high-performing teaching and learning environment; 2) rigorously preparing students for college; and 3) developing student holistically. (e16) Using the Logic Model the applicant lists objectives and activities with desired outcomes and performance measures. (e38-e40)

The applicant acknowledges the strategic use of growth and mastery data as critical to meeting the school's goals and that this data will guide decisions on differentiating instruction, interventions, and professional development needs. A description of progress monitoring tools was provided. (e48)

Weaknesses:

Goal 2 is that students are rigorously prepared for college. The objectives, activities, outcomes and performance measures of 2B, regarding special education students, are not adequate for achieving the goal. (e39) A better activity, outcome and performance measurement would be to measure the growth in achievement in ELA, Math and Science, rather than just achieving IEP goals.

Reader's Score: 12

2. ii. The design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.

Strengths:

The applicant intends to partner with nationally recognized consultants known for their experience and expertise in designing programs and practices for schools that serve a large number of low income and minority students. (e41-e42)

The applicant describes a plan that is based on sound educational practices found in a number of high performing charters educating traditionally underserved and educationally disadvantaged students. These strategies include extensive teacher professional development and coaching (e22), and the use of research-based programs (MTSS,

Sub

RTI, and CASEL) aligned to a social and emotional curriculum. (e39-e40)

Weaknesses:

The applicant states on page e36 that its full inclusion model focuses on training teachers in the skills required for effective teaching and differentiated instruction. This approach does not fully address meeting the needs of special education students identified or English Language Learners. There is no description of how special education students will be instructed in the least restrictive environment or what activities will take place ensuring they receive grade level instruction. There is no description of what model will be used for instructing English Language Learners, whether it is full immersion or an SEI classroom.

Even though the school intends to actively recruit students with special needs and ELL students (e12), there is no discussion of what barriers special education and ELL students will face within the school model. Outside of tiered interventions there are no specific strategies provided to address the additional services required for special education and ELL students.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. **The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:**

The extent to which --

Reader's Score: 16

Sub

1. i. **The applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability; and**

Strengths:

The applicant plans to intentionally seek diverse candidates at all levels of the organization and is partnering with a firm that has a proven record of developing diverse talent pipelines and creating equitable and inclusive processes. (e51)

Weaknesses:

The data provided to illustrate the success of Edgility Consulting is limited to their recruiting candidates of color. There is no information provided as to their success in recruiting other traditionally underrepresented talent based on race, national origin, gender, age or disability.

Reader's Score: 1

Sub

2. ii. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel

Strengths:

The three key project personnel presented possess relevant training and experiences to carry out the project. Equally important is that all of these key personnel have experience working in schools that demonstrate high levels of success in increasing the academic performance of educationally disadvantaged children. (Resumes e94-e102)

The Board of Trustees is made up of a diverse group of professionals from education, law, government, finance and non-profit organizations that have relevant experiences to adequately oversee the project and hold key personnel accountable for proposed project outcomes. (e53-e55)

The applicant has developed strategic partnerships to create programs of family engagement, quality professional development for staff, student literacy, and community development. (e36-e37)

Weaknesses:

Other than stating it is the Academy's intention to seek diverse candidates at all levels of the organization, the applicant does not provide job descriptions or performance qualifications for candidates nor descriptions of any hiring practices it uses.

The school intends to start with K-1 and add a grade per year. While the three key project personnel have extensive training and experiences working in schools, none of them include in their resumes experience working with early childhood or primary age students.

Assuming a 17% special education population in year one, key personnel does not include a Special Ed Director and none of the three key personnel listed indicate on their resumes experience working with special education populations.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the applicant's management plan, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 16

Sub

1. i. The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;

Strengths:

The management plan for the proposed project defines the activities, timeline, responsible party, milestones, and is aligned with the projects goals and objectives. (e57-e60)

A pro-forma budget narrative was provided that defined the timelines and assumptions for the proposed project as

Sub

needed to successfully accomplish the project's tasks. (e109-e113)

Weaknesses:

On the management plan table provided on pages e57-e60, the dates given from start to end do not seem to correspond with the milestone dates. Some objectives have specific milestone completion dates and some, i.e. Obj. 2.A. appears to cover four years of the grant period with only one identified milestone that has no specific timeframe for completion and does not indicate that it is annually reassessed.

There is no timeline provided concerning the hiring of staff. It is not clear how many positions will be required for the first year of operation and continuing on until the school meets its grade level capacity.

Reader's Score: 12

2. ii. **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project; and**

Strengths:

The proposal describes the time commitments of the three key personnel of the school. The division of duties appear adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project. (e60-e61)

Weaknesses:

Assuming a 17% special education population, waiting until year two to employ a special education director does not seem appropriate or adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project's intent to service the needs of special education students.

Reader's Score: 2

3. iii. **How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate.**

Strengths:

In addition to the Board of Trustees, the applicant describes its plan to have a parent advisory council, open to any member of the school community (e42), and to survey parents annually. (e65)

The applicant has already developed strategic partnerships with local non-profits, literacy groups, community development organizations, and local churches to assist in its goal to provide a high-quality educational choice, to meet students' emotional needs, and to successfully develop school leaders and teachers. (e38, e55-e57, e72-e82)

Weaknesses:

There were no weaknesses identified.

Reader's Score: 2

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Continuation Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the continuation plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the continuation plan, the Secretary considers the extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate the charter school that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.

Strengths:

The project's commitment to high-quality instruction is evidenced in its plans for extensive professional development, curriculum supervision and active teacher coaching. These efforts should result in higher teacher retention and produce stronger student outcomes over time. (e62)

The applicant has established relationships with key community organizations and individuals committed to assuring the success of this school beyond the project funding period. (e47, e55-e57, e72-e82)

The applicant provided a 5-year pro-forma budget that projects a healthy fund balance at the end of year 5 that should adequately carry the school through after the grant funding period ends. (e87-e93)

The applicant has already secured a start-up funding commitment of \$650,000 from the Maplewood Foundation. This will allow for expenditures outside of the grant funding period for several years. (e89)

Weaknesses:

In the applicant's 5 year pro-forma budget (e88-e93), the district revenue for special education students appears extremely high and disproportionate to the projected expenses budgeted for special education teachers, purchased services, and equipment.

Title Funding is formula driven and not guaranteed. Negative variances in these revenue projections would dramatically affect year end fund balances.

Reader's Score: 13

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Opening a New Charter School or Replicating or Expanding a High-quality Charter School to Serve Native American Students

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

a. Propose to open a new charter school, or replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that—

- 1.Utilizes targeted outreach and recruitment in order to serve a high proportion of Native American students, consistent with nondiscrimination requirements contained in the U.S. Constitution and Federal civil rights laws;
2. Has a mission and focus that will address the unique educational needs of Native American students, such as through the use of instructional programs and teaching methods that reflect and preserve Native American language, culture, and history; and
3. Has or will have a governing board with a substantial percentage of members who are members of Indian Tribes or Native American organizations located within the area to be

served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school;

b. Submit a letter of support from at least one Indian Tribe or Native American organization located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school; and

c. Meaningfully collaborate with the Indian Tribe(s) or Native American organization(s) from which the applicant has received a letter of support in a timely, active, and ongoing manner with respect to the development and implementation of the educational program at the charter school.

Strengths:

There are no strengths identified.

Weaknesses:

The proposed project does not intend to target outreach and recruitment to serve a high proportion of Native American students.

Reader's Score: **0**

Status: Submitted
Last Updated: 09/05/2019 11:46 AM

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 08/30/2019 04:40 PM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Catalyst Academy Charter School (S282B190005)

Reader #3: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Assisting Educationally Disadvantage Students		
1. Significance	15	12
Quality of Project Design		
1. Project Design	30	25
Quality of Project Personnel		
1. Project Personnel	20	16
Quality of the Management Plan		
1. Management Plan	20	16
Quality of the Continuation Plan		
1. Continuation Plan	15	12
Sub Total	100	81
Priority Questions		
Competitive Preference Priority		
Competitive Preference Priority 2		
1. CPP2	10	0
Sub Total	10	0
Total	110	81

Technical Review Form

Panel #1 - FY19 New Developers 84.282b - 1: 84.282B

Reader #3: *****

Applicant: Catalyst Academy Charter School (S282B190005)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Assisting Educationally Disadvantaged Students

1. The Secretary considers the significance of contribution in assisting educationally disadvantaged students for the proposed project. In determining the significance of the contribution the proposed project will make in expanding educational opportunity for educationally disadvantaged students and enabling those students to meet challenging State academic standards, the Secretary considers the quality of the plan to ensure that the charter school the applicant proposes to open, replicate, or expand will recruit, enroll, and effectively serve educationally disadvantaged students, which include children with disabilities and English learners.

Strengths:

The applicant presents geographic and demographic information outlined on pages e16-e25. The applicant proposes a no-cost, K-8 college preparatory public charter school for economically and educationally disadvantaged families and students who are underserved by the existing public school options. The applicant provides a description of the targeted neighboring school community based on income, employment, education, and crime (p. e12-e23). The applicant presents demographic information of serving a high needs population of 83% of African American students, 12% of Caucasian students, 10% of English learners, 22% of targeted families living in poverty, and 12% of target families not completing high school (page e23-e24).

Additionally, the applicant shares a recruitment and enrollment strategy for better access to educational opportunities through an interactive grassroots community strategy (p. e25). The applicant offers a range of evidence-based charter school models along with research-based instructional and social supports. For example, the applicant assists targeted students with an expanded instructional and project-based learning time approach, through a longer school day and year, with daily high-quality learning opportunities for academics and behavior (p. e23-e36).

Weaknesses:

The applicant provides no evidence to support the low academic achievement of students with disabilities. The applicant does not provide sufficient information on academic test scores to determine accurate significance for serving educationally disadvantaged students with disabilities with the comparison data to other schools and the State. The applicant does not provide data from the annual parent and teacher survey.

Reader's Score: 12

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Design

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the design of the proposed project. In determining the quality of the design of the proposed project, the Secretary considers the following factors:

The extent to which --

Reader's Score: 25

Sub

- 1. i. The goals, objectives, and outcomes to be achieved by the proposed project are clearly specific and measurable; and**

Strengths:

The applicant provides a logic model which includes measurable objectives and outcomes. The applicant outlines proposed activities and the frequency for data reporting in the charts on pages e38 to e40. The applicant indicates frequent progress monitoring of performance using data for internal tracking to meet the goals. For example, the applicant uses progress monitoring tools such as daily in-class assessments, curriculum based assessments and nationally recognized assessments (p. e38-e51).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe goals relating to expanding its enrollment across subgroups, or provide the actual plans and processes for evaluating the performance measures (e.g., parties responsible, measures for each indicator). The applicant does not include specific strategies targeted at intentionally increasing enrollment of students with disabilities and has not identified goals or metrics for increasing enrollment. The applicant does not provide baseline data for students with disabilities, English learners, and parent and teacher surveys. The insufficient data description makes it a challenge for the determination of a quality design for relevant and attainable outcomes.

Reader's Score: 12

- 2. ii. The design of the proposed project is appropriate to, and will successfully address, the needs of the target population or other identified needs.**

Strengths:

The applicant describes an educational model to partner with successful charter schools, who work with similar populations and conditions, for the planning of instructional implementation. The applicant implements a set of initiatives through the evidence-based curricular and instruction practices, while building the capacity of school leaders and families (p. e39-e51).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a specific plan to intentionally increase the enrollment of students with disabilities. There are some important omissions with curriculum and professional development schedules to successfully address the needs of educationally disadvantaged students.

Reader's Score: 13

Selection Criteria - Quality of Project Personnel

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the personnel who will carry out the proposed project. In determining the quality of project personnel, the Secretary considers:

The extent to which --

Reader's Score: 16

Sub

1. i. The applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability; and

Strengths:

The applicant provides information on a proven search company that supports the employment procedures by identifying, selecting, and developing diverse talent pipelines and creating equity and inclusive selection processes (p. e51-e68).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not provide a policy or a clear description of specific steps of how it will address barriers that are applicable to address general education provisions that acknowledge other underrepresented groups such as disability and English language learners.

Reader's Score: 1

2. ii. The qualifications, including relevant training and experience, of key project personnel

Strengths:

The applicant provides some information with the experiences of the founder, school principal and key internal organizational personnel (e51-e57). The experiences of the internal key personnel are appropriate to the project as evidenced by the narrative and resumes. The applicant presents experienced internal leadership with career progressions that, for many, across school, nonprofit, and business leadership. The applicant shares personnel experience of the founder in managing previous grants to ensure quality implementation of a proposed project.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not clearly describe the qualification breakdown of the consultants and their responsibilities to support and collaborate with other key personnel (p. e41-ee46). The quality controls are questionable in the area of an unsecured independent audit and no contingency plan for finalizing an operating agreement.

Reader's Score: 15

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Management Plan

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the management plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the applicant's management plan, the Secretary considers the following factors:

Reader's Score: 16

Sub

1. i. **The adequacy of the management plan to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, timelines, and milestones for accomplishing project tasks;**

Strengths:

The management plan is linked to the project objectives and the financial management plan, as the applicant does not note specific responsibilities of staff to accomplish tasks related to the milestones, not do the tasks relate directly to the financial management plan (p. e39). The applicant provides qualifications of the key personnel, most of them are at the corporate level, with indication of who will be performing these tasks at the site. In addition, the timeline does not offer specific personnel responsible for the tasks and goals, only departments. The plan is very general not specific to these.

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not adequately address the plan to monitor and adjust for the increased enrollment of students with disabilities. The applicant does not adequately describe how the quality controls will adequately address obtaining the operating agreement. The applicant has not secured an independent audit (p. e64-e69).

Reader's Score: 12

2. ii. **The extent to which the time commitments of the project director and principal investigator and other key project personnel are appropriate and adequate to meet the objectives of the proposed project; and**

Strengths:

The applicant thoroughly describes adequate time commitments of the project director and other key personnel. The time commitments of the project director and other key project personnel supports the quality of the management plan for the instructional and operational tasks of the proposed project. The time commitments will support the monitoring of the implementation of key activities of the project. For example, the school principal spends 75% of time for instructional leadership (p. e60-e69).

Weaknesses:

No weaknesses found.

Reader's Score: 3

3. iii. **How the applicant will ensure that a diversity of perspectives are brought to bear in the operation of the proposed project, including those of parents, teachers, the business community, a variety of disciplinary and professional fields, recipients or beneficiaries of services, or others, as appropriate.**

Strengths:

The applicant demonstrates a diversity of perspectives in the operations of the proposed project. The founder, school director and school leadership present diverse expertise to carry out the implementation of activities of the proposed project. Some of these venues include parent and teacher surveys, a parent advisory council, and community partner engagement (p. e61).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not describe how it includes the perspectives of students through surveys and engagement, especially students with disabilities and English learners.

Reader's Score: 1

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Continuation Plan

- 1. The Secretary considers the quality of the continuation plan for the proposed project. In determining the quality of the continuation plan, the Secretary considers the extent to which the eligible applicant is prepared to continue to operate the charter school that would receive grant funds in a manner consistent with the eligible applicant's application once the grant funds under this program are no longer available.**

Strengths:

The applicant presents a plan for programmatic and operations beyond the grant. The applicant has a strong governing board, letters of support and historical success in securing grants and advocating for equity with the community (p. e63). For example, the applicant demonstrates financial capacity by securing an initial foundation grant of \$650,000 for the opening of the charter school. The applicant also addresses strategies to support the year two to five operating budget, moving beyond management and operations, to the instructional capacity of teacher development and curriculum implementation (e61-e63).

Weaknesses:

The applicant does not have an existing or potential commitment to support fundraising efforts. The applicant does not address sustainability beyond the grant to support a high level of personnel with potential salary increases and costs per student funds. The applicant does not have commitments or secured vendors for added value fundraising.

Reader's Score: 12

Priority Questions

Competitive Preference Priority - Competitive Preference Priority 2

- 1. Competitive Preference Priority 2: Opening a New Charter School or Replicating or Expanding a High-quality Charter School to Serve Native American Students**

To receive points under this priority, an applicant must --

a. Propose to open a new charter school, or replicate or expand a high-quality charter school, that—

- 1.Utilizes targeted outreach and recruitment in order to serve a high proportion of Native American students, consistent with nondiscrimination requirements contained in the U.S. Constitution and Federal civil rights laws;**
- 2. Has a mission and focus that will address the unique educational needs of Native American students, such as through the use of instructional programs and teaching methods that reflect and preserve Native American language, culture, and history; and**

3. Has or will have a governing board with a substantial percentage of members who are members of Indian Tribes or Native American organizations located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school;
- b. Submit a letter of support from at least one Indian Tribe or Native American organization located within the area to be served by the new, replicated, or expanded charter school; and
- c. Meaningfully collaborate with the Indian Tribe(s) or Native American organization(s) from which the applicant has received a letter of support in a timely, active, and ongoing manner with respect to the development and implementation of the educational program at the charter school.

Strengths:

There are no strengths identified.

Weaknesses:

The applicant did not address this competitive preference priority.

Reader's Score: **0**

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